Bandaranaike – Chelvanayakam Pact, July 1957

Part A

Representatives of the Federal Party had a series of discussions with the Prime Minister in an effort to resolve the differences of opinion that had been growing and creating tension.

At the early stages of these conversations it became evident that it was not possible for the Prime Minister to accede to some of the demands of the Federal Party.

The Prime Minister stated that, from the point of view of the Government, he was not in a position to discuss the setting up of a Federal Constitution, or regional autonomy or any step which would abrogate the Official Language Act.

The question then arose whether it was possible to explore the possibility of an adjustment without the Federal Party abandoning or surrendering any of its fundamental principles or objectives.

At this stage the Prime Minister suggested an examination of the government's Draft Regional Council Bill to see whether provisions can be made under it to meet, reasonably, some of the matters in this regard which the Federal Party had in view.

The agreements so reached are embodied in a separate document.

Regarding the language the Federal Party reiterated its stand for parity but in view of the position of the Prime Minister in this matter they came to an agreement by way of an adjustment. They pointed out that it was important for them that there would be a recognition of Tamil as a national language and that the administrative work in of the Northern and the Eastern Provinces should be done in Tamil.

The Prime Minister stated that as mentioned by him earlier it was not possible for him to take any steps that would abrogate the Official Language Act.

Use of Tamil; After discussions it was agreed that the proposed legislation should contain recognition of Tamil as the language of a national minority of Ceylon and that the four points mentioned by Prime Minister should include provision that, without infringing on the position of the Official Language as such, the language of administration of the Northern And Eastern Provinces be Tamil, and any necessary provision be made for non-Tamil speaking minorities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

Regarding the question of Ceylon citizenship for the people of Indian descent and the Citizenship Act, the representatives of the Federal Party forwarded their views to the Prime Minister and pressed for an early settlement.

The Prime Minister indicated that this problem would receive early consideration.

In view of these conclusions the Federal Party stated that they were withdrawing their proposed satyagraha.

Part B

1. Regional areas to be defined in the Bill itself by embodying them in the Schedule thereto.

2. That the Northern Province is to form one regional area whilst the Eastern Province is to be divided into one or more regional areas.

3. Provision is to be made in the Bill to enable two or more regions to amalgamate even beyond provincial limit; and for one region to divide itself subject to ratification by Parliament. Further provision is to be made in the Bill for two or more regions to collaborate for specific purposes of common interests.

DIRECT ELECTIONS

4. Provision is to be made for the direct election of Regional councillors. Provision is to be made for a delimitation commission or commissions for carving out electorates. The question of MPs representing districts falling within regional areas to be eligible to function as chairman is to be considered. The question of Government Agents being Regional Commissioners is to be considered. The question of supervisory functions over larger towns, strategic towns and municipalities is to be looked into.

SPECIAL POWERS

5. Parliament is to delegate powers and specify them in the Act. It was agreed that regional councils should have powers over specified subjects including agriculture, cooperatives, lands and land developments, colonisation, education, health, industries, fisheries, housing, social services, electricity, water schemes and roads. Requisite definition of powers be made in the Bill

COLONISATION SCHEMES

6. It was agreed that in the matter of colonisation schemes the powers of the regional councils shall include the powers to select allottees to whom land within their area of authority shall be alienated and also power to select personnel to be employed for work on such schemes. The position regarding the area at present administered by the Gal Oya Board in this matter requires consideration.

TAXATION AND BORROWING

7. The powers in regard to the Regional councils vested in the Minister of Local Government in the draft bill to be revised with a view to vesting control in Parliament wherever necessary.

8. The Central Government will provide block grants to the regional councils. The principles on which the grants will be computed will be gone into. The regional councils shall have powers of taxation and borrowing.